

Greek American Oral History Project

Oral History Interview

with

JoAnne Alexia Demas Horrell

April 6, 2006  
Citrus Heights, California

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Capital Campus Oral History Program  
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Greek American Oral History Project

Interview History for Oral History of  
JoAnne Alexia Demas Horrell

Interviewer's Name: Debbie Poulsen

Interview Date and Location: The interview was conducted on April 6, 2006, in the home of Mrs. Horrell in Citrus Heights, California.

Context Notes: JoAnne Horrell, a first generation Greek, is the daughter of Gust J. Demas who was born in Psari, Greece and Toulas Kerhoulas born in Roseville, California to Greek immigrant parents from the region by Sparta. Mrs. Horrell intended to read a history that she had written for the interview. However, she graciously agreed to answer questions instead. She edited the interview, and felt it was important to add a few words and sentences for clarification purposes. This interview was interrupted twice by the telephone and at another point as her son walked through to leave for a class.

Mrs. Horrell expressed her feelings about her family, heritage, church, and Greek foods, in a relaxed yet articulate manner. Some of the unnecessary verbal fillers have not been included.

Tapes and Interview Records: The Greek Orthodox Church of the Annunciation in Sacramento holds the original tape recording of the interview and a full transcript. Copies of the recording and transcript are deposited with the Department of Special Collections and University Archives at California State University, Sacramento.



[Session 1, April 6, 2006]

[Begin Tape 1, Side A]

POULSEN: This is Debbie Poulsen, a student at California State University, Sacramento, enrolled in the Graduate Program of Public History. Today is April 6, 2006, we are in Citrus Heights, and I am speaking today as part of the Greek Immigrant Project, with . . .

HORRELL: Joanne Horrell.

POULSEN: She is the daughter of . . .

HORRELL: Gust John Demas and Toula Demas.

POULSEN: You are first generation?

HORRELL: I am a first generation. Yes.

POULSEN: Now, were you born in Sacramento?

HORRELL: I was born here in Sacramento, at Mercy Hospital on J Street.

POULSEN: . . . and raised in the East Sac area?

HORRELL: East Sacramento, yes, correct.

POULSEN: This is a project concerning members of your church, which is called?

HORRELL: Greek Orthodox Church of Annunciation on Alhambra and F Street.

POULSEN: You were raised going to that church?

HORRELL: Yes.

POULSEN: . . . and do you still attend there?



HORRELL: Yes.

POULSEN: I see, and your parents of course, were coming from the group members there?

HORRELL: My father was a founding member of the Greek Orthodox Church of Annunciation at 6<sup>th</sup> and N Street. Let's see, I wrote that down, I think that it is important that we have that the church was located in the beginning, in the 1920s, at 6<sup>th</sup> and N Street. Then moved in the '50s to Alhambra and F. My father was a founding member of that church in 1920.

POULSEN: Now, when did you father come from Greece?

HORRELL: He came in 1912; he was 15 years old.

POULSEN: Fifteen years old, did he come with family or by himself?

HORRELL: No, his older brother was here, and he came through Ellis Island in 1910. He followed his brother. They migrated to California because of the weather. It was much like the Mediterranean climate that they had come from. They ended up here in Sacramento.

POULSEN: Now we were just discussing that your father came from a village called?

HORRELL: Psari, P-s-a-r-i.

HORRELL: What was the region?

HORRELL: The region was the Peloponnese.

POULSEN: You were telling me that he went to school?



HORRELL: At Kyparissia, which he had to go to by foot, and so it was like a day's journey from his village to the little seaport town where the gymnasiou was, or the school was, and then he would go home on the weekends.

POULSEN: What kind of work did his father do?

HORRELL: It's interesting because the men didn't really work. You were lucky to get a husband and you had to have a dowry. So my Papou, my grandfather, basically didn't work. He did play the violin. He was a violinist and so music was probably in our genes, my brother's and mine, from my grandfather. He spent most of his days at the platia (phonetic), which is the plaza in Psari where all the men gathered during the day and discussed current events, philosophy, the past and the present, and they played with their worry beads.

POULSEN: So, now your father went to school. Did he have a focus or interest that he was . . .

HORRELL: Yea, he wanted to be a professor of History and once his brother came here, he decided that he would follow him, and come to the "Promised Land," the "land of opportunity," and that is how he came here.

POULSEN: So he left his parents in Greece?

HORRELL: He left his parents in Greece, and he never saw his mother again. She died, she waited for him well, she died at 97. She was blind by this time, and he never did return because of all the things that he had here, family and



business and one thing after the other. He wasn't able to go back until fifty years had passed and when he did, she was already gone. He did support his mother; he supported his sisters. He married all of his sisters with a dowry, four sisters with a dowry. Yea, he was a good older brother.

POULSEN: What kind of, I mean, what kind of money was it he sent them back? Was it a hundred dollars, or do you know?

HORRELL: I think one dowry could have been eight or ten thousand dollars for one sister to get married. Oh yea, without a dowry a woman couldn't get married. Today it may be different, but in those days you had to have a dowry in order to get married and the guy could be a lazy boy, [Laughs] but you know.

POULSEN: When your father got here and then worked here in the U.S. what type of work did he do?

HORRELL: His first job was as a water boy for the Southern Pacific and he used to tell us this story. He saw this beautiful black and white animal, and the people were mean to the immigrants. So, "Oh, if you get that animal, you will be able to get money for the coat." So he went after the skunk in the rail yard. The skunk got him; he had to bury his clothes! [Laughs] He said it was one of the worst experiences he had ever had. That was the end of the skunk, you know.



After he was a water boy for the Southern Pacific, he went to work for um, and drove a Jitney. A Jitney was probably something like that [Shows a photo]. He drove a Jitney and then he went to work for his older brother, yea, that's my dad and then he went to work for his brother, who ran Teddy's Taxi. Teddy and Ruth Demas had Teddy's Taxi, and my dad drove the taxi for them.

After that, he became a proprietor of a bakery and it was called, well first it was called Star, no, Athens Bakery. He went into business with his first cousin, Petros; and Petros Demas and Gust Demas ran the bakery. Only relatives worked for them and it was at 401 T Street. After years they got into squabbles, and my uncle left the business. My father opened Star Bread Company and again he employed his relatives. That was at 12<sup>th</sup> and G Street. That was the whole city block, and this remains today; a red brick building a part of my father's original bakery.

Then after that in World War II, he became a nightclub owner, and a café owner. Several of the Greeks went to Marysville with the advent of Beale Air Force Base. They opened nightclubs in Marysville, so my father owned the Casablanca Night Club and Peoples Café until after the war, until almost the 60s when he returned to Sacramento. He would come home on weekends, and go to be in Marysville during the week. We lived there for a short time and then had to come back to Sacramento, because



we missed our church, we missed our friends He would come home on weekends.

POULSEN: Now you were telling me that your parents got married in 1932. Your mother also came from Greece?

HORRELL: No, my mother's family, my mother's parents were from Arahova, now Laconia, near Sparta. Actually my grandparents on my mother's side, her mother and dad, were the seventh couple to be married in San Francisco, at the Holy Trinity Church. They were the seventh immigrant Greek family to be married, so they are kind of historical.

POULSEN: So they lived in San Francisco then?

HORRELL: She was born in Roseville; they, my grandparents, went to Grass Valley, and then ended up in Roseville. My grandfather had a restaurant. They were to have six children and raised three more, either her sister or brother's orphaned children, nine children. They were very poor, but everyone stopped at the Kerhoulas' house. It was like the meeting place; now if you were from out of town, it was where you went.

POULSEN: How do you spell that last name?

HORRELL: K-e-r-h-o-u-l-a-s . . .

POULSEN: How many children did your parents have then?

HORRELL: My um, parents had, their first child died 18 months after she was born. She was born in 1932, in the end of '32, December. She died from



pneumonia in February of 1934. She was about 18 months old, whatever. Then they had my brother, and five years later they had me. Then they had two more daughters who died at birth, so they ended up with my brother and I.

POULSEN: Did you ever hear them say anything about how your father felt to be leaving his home country? Or was it just such an exciting thing to be come to the U.S., or what were his feelings?

HORRELL: His feelings were this: this was the "Promised Land." Everyone was coming to America, you know, and of course it's the melting pot. We, all of us immigrants, even today's immigrants have made this country what it is. My father always felt so privileged to be a U.S. citizen, to have come here, he lost his brother early on . . .

POULSEN: How did he lose his brother?

HORRELL: You know, something, I don't know what happened.

POULSEN: Did he lose touch with him?

HORRELL: No, he died. He is buried in East Lawn Cemetery, as you come in the gates to the left. I've got to go someday, and see where he is. He was to lose his brother, older brother. I think he grieved all his life for him. You know.

POULSEN: He didn't have any other family around?

HORRELL: He didn't have, well he had cousins, and they came too from the village. There was a network then, of relatives, and then he had all of his what



they call, Psadae. All the people from the village came here to Sacramento and there was a group of them. It was wonderful, because they had each other.

POULSEN: So where did they live?

HORRELL: They all lived generally around the church, you know, McKinley Boulevard, uh East Sacramento. My "Thea" Martha lived on F Street, a block from what we called the "new church," Alhambra and F. My Thea, my other thea who is 96 she still walks to church. Can you believe that?

POULSEN: So you were raised in that neighborhood?

HORRELL: I was raised in that neighborhood.

POULSEN: In the '30s, now, ok.

HORRELL: And then I was born in '39, at the end of '39.

POULSEN: Just before the wartime?

HORRELL: Yea.

POULSEN: All right, how did your Dad's English sound?

HORRELL: My dad learned English from, my dad was a *learned man*; he was a, he was like the old Indian chief. He knew stories galore, mythologies, and history, whatever you wanted to know. He had a command of the English language like no one I have ever known. He learned English from a dictionary. Can you believe that?

POULSEN: Did he bring anything with him?



HORRELL: A little trunk. I don't know if my mother threw it out, I don't know what happened to it, but I sure would like to know where it is.

POULSEN: . . . and probably not too much money?

HORRELL: No money. He had no money; he had no money in his pocket. He didn't know the language. He only had a brother here.

POULSEN: His brother was already here?

HORRELL: Yea, So he got to New York City, and just decided that California was the place.

HORRELL: His brother did, because he followed his brother.

POULSEN: Right.

HORRELL: He followed his brother. I was going to show you something and I don't have it . . .

POULSEN: Did he ever talk about what he missed about Greece?

HORRELL: I think he missed his family, and his sisters who he didn't see again until fifty years later when they were all old. I think he missed not having seen his mother before she died, and not being able to fulfill his promises he had made to her. I think that he was always grateful, always grateful, to be in this country. He said this was the "land of opportunity."

I took a trip with him in 1961. I wanted to stay there and he said, "No, you have to come home. You will not be able to survive here." You know, things were so primitive in this village that nothing had changed,



and everybody was old now. He had a sister, who sat across the table from him, and I sat like in the middle of the table one evening, and you know they had not seen each other in fifty years. They were like twins. Their mannerisms were the same. Everything was the same, and I couldn't believe it. I'm looking this way, and this way, and looking at her and my dad and you know, it was amazing. That is how much the genes are so prevalent in us, all of us, and um, that was a wonderful experience. But again, he said I couldn't have been able to live there.

You know, they didn't have running water in '61 in this village. They didn't have electricity. If you wanted something for dinner like a chicken, my aunt went out and brought it in, and skinned it. But it was wonderful; it was really wonderful. Another thing, even the men hung around the platia (phonetic) all day long with their worry beads, lazy . . .

POULSEN: What are worry beads?

HORRELL: Well, they play with these beads; it's just something to do with your hands.

POULSEN: I see.

HORRELL: But that is how it is or was, I don't know if it still is, or not. But, my poor Yia Yia would go out in the fields from sun up until sun down and have to come home and cook the meal, and the kids would go get the water from the well. I mean she had the responsibility of the house, and the family,



and then she had to go earn the living besides. They ate from the soil,  
amazing . . .

POULSEN: Can you tell me about your personal involvement with the church?

HORRELL: I grew up in the church. It was the center of our lives. Being first generation, we weren't really, we experienced, or I experienced, I don't know about the rest of my friends, I experienced prejudice. The way that I was accepted was because I was talented. I was a singer. I could perform and so all the kids wanted me in their groups. They wanted me in their clubs. But very definitely, I experienced prejudice. I was called "Greek the Freak" in grammar school. I thought I was ugly, you know, and later found out, "No, I'm not ugly. Of course I'm not ugly," and it got to the point that I was saying with all these different nationalities, except Greek.

I didn't truly understand my heritage until I went for a visit with my dad, and I cried for three days when we got to the village. To think my father came from this place, and was born under the house we were in. A midwife, village midwife, you know, took care of my Yia Yia, my grandmother. She had her six children, and from these primitive beginnings my father came to America, and became a *somebody*.

I mean he worked hard, he had a business, he did all these things and it was just . . . I couldn't believe it. I was amazed. Never again did I feel any kind of prejudice or that I was less than anybody else. I was as



good, if not better, than everybody else. I held my head high and I was proud.

POULSEN: How old were you when you went on this trip?

HORRELL: I was about twenty. Getting back to the church, the church was the nucleus of all of us, and as families. We went to Sunday school; we went to Greek school during the week.

POULSEN: What is Greek school?

HORRELL: You learn how to speak Greek, that was like you had to do that. All the kids went to Greek School. You'd go to school all day, and then you would go to Greek School.

POULSEN: Once a week?

HORRELL: Sometimes, sometimes three times a week. I mean it was all it was time consuming. It was all consuming, and then you had church, and the choir.

POULSEN: You had church the same time as Sunday school?

HORRELL: No, it was different. First you went to Sunday school. When you were older you joined the choir, and Sunday school was on Sundays and still is. All the social events were at the church. The church was the nucleus of everything that we did.

POULSEN: What would be some of the examples of social events?

HORRELL: Luncheons, dances, um, what else did they do?

POULSEN: Did they observe holidays?



HORRELL: Holidays, yea. We had Easter. Let's talk about Christmas Eve, um Christmas Eve. We go to church just like Americans do, like you do in your churches.

Our Easter though, is based on the Julian calendar. So, like this year we are like a week, I think we are a week off. We had our Holy Week and we go to church, like every night if you want and during the day, and on Friday night we march around our church. We have a midnight mass on Saturday and it is just . . .

POULSEN: Do you wear a special clothing or . . .

HORRELL: No, no.

POULSEN: You march around your church?

HORRELL: We have a police escort, you know, for safety reasons. The parishioners carry the Epitaph, and the rest of the parishioners carry lighted candles. They follow the Priests around the outside of the church, for four city blocks.

POULSEN: What is an Epitaph?

HORRELL: It is the tomb of the Jesus; it is all decorated with gardenias and just impressive. It is beautiful, and then we have the midnight mass the next night. It is traditional for parishioners to go next door and have what they call the "soup." You know, breaking your fast, and the soup is called



margaritza [phonetic], it is the innards of the lamb made into a very special soup. Only served after midnight mass on Easter.

POULSEN: Can you spell it?

HORRELL: No, I definitely have to phonetically do it mag-are-it-za. [phonetically]

POULSEN: I'll look it up.

HORRELL: They might have it in a Greek cookbook.

POULSEN: Yea, so the innards of what?

HORRELL: Of the lamb. It is delicious, if you don't know what you are eating. I remember the first time I ate it, and everybody giggled and laughed, and I asked for a second bowl. [Laughs] So then they told me what I was eating. But it's delicious. They wash the insides out, and the guts and all that, and they make this special soup. I mean it is considered a delicacy. So you have soup, and you have bread, and salad, and for breaking the fast.

POULSEN: This is at Easter time?

HORRELL: Uh huh, after midnight mass.

POULSEN: Well, that would be one of the main holidays, as well as Christmas?

HORRELL: Oh yes. And you know the people who came here really didn't know when they were born, because they celebrated in "name days." They didn't celebrate birthdays. So if you were like my father he wasn't sure exactly when he was born, because he always celebrated St. Konstandinos' Day. There were "Saint Days," and his was May 21<sup>st</sup>.



POULSEN: So were they named after saints, on the date they were born?

HORRELL: Yea, that could have been. That is an interesting question. I don't really know, but I do know that everyone, his friends, celebrated name days and would go to a different house. For example, if it was James' Day, you would go to all the Jims' houses. This is in the old days and you had a little liqueur and a Greek sweet. You would just visit all the people with that name on that day. Same with my dad, and yea, it was wonderful.

POULSEN: Were you one of the Daughters of Penelope?

HORRELL: I might have been way back.

POULSEN: What is that?

HORRELL: It's a women's organization and the Philoptochos . . .

POULSEN: What is that?

HORRELL: It is another church organization that raises money for different projects and through the church. It's a ladies organization. I'm in that.

POULSEN: So, you did a lot of singing and entertaining mostly?

HORRELL: Yea, I did. They used to get me up during WWII. The Greek sailors would come through and they would all end up at my mother's house, and they would get me up in the middle of the night to dance and perform. I gotta get that picture for you, can I stop for a minute? Let me get something.

[Laughs and shows picture] This is me and my godparents.

POULSEN: They were members of your church, probably?



HORRELL: Oh yea, I think she was the . . .

POULSEN: OK.

HORRELL: This is me when I was around ten.

POULSEN: OK. That is spelled D-e-m-a-s?

HORRELL: Yea, however in the village, when they came here they didn't know. So that's what they went by, and when we were there in 1961, nobody there knew us by Demas. So we found out we were "Demikes" in the village.

POULSEN: Do you know how to spell that?

HORRELL: I think it is D-e-m-i-k-e-s. [Laughs] That was the family name and we had no idea.

POULSEN: I could see how that would happen.

HORRELL: The other interesting thing that I found being with my dad there was that they called him a foreigner, when he returned. In this country, he was called a foreigner, so I said, "Daddy, you are a man without a country". [Laughs] Yes.

POULSEN: So what schools did you attend?

HORRELL: I attended David Lubin Grammar School in East Sacramento, Kit Carson Junior High, Sacramento High School, and A. R. yea, and then . . .

POULSEN: Were there any types of pastimes you enjoyed as a youth that were centered with other places besides church?



HORRELL: I can tell you that Greek folk dancing was really a pivotal part of our lives. We just loved to dance and we still do today. We wear costumes, and that was a very enjoyable part of our church. [Pause]

POULSEN: Hello.

[Ms. Horrell's son walks through on his way to a college class]

HORRELL: OK, be careful, Chris. [Pause]

They had choir conventions, as they do today. They had the dances they were wonderful. Some of them were held at the Senator Hotel. They were formal and they had big bands.

POULSEN: Was that with the high school or the church?

HORRELL: The church.

POULSEN: The church had these big bands?

HORRELL: Yes, these organization like AHEPA and the Daughters of Penelope and GAPPA and . . .

POULSEN: What is the AHEPA?

HORRELL: That is a men's organization of the Daughters of Penelope.

POULSEN: . . . and what is the GAPPA?

POULSEN: GAPPA is another organization and we were never, you either were AHEPA or GAPPA, you were not both. So, I'm not too familiar with them.

POULSEN: Would you consider your parents strict because they were from the old country?



HORRELL: I think my mother was stricter than my dad. My dad was, because he was out in business; he was with people, [Pause] he was understanding. My mother could be really strict, and you would think that she was born in the old country. She spoke and read perfect Greek. All of her sisters married Greeks from Greece. They all spoke fluent Greek, because their parents probably didn't speak much in English.

POULSEN: How was your mother's English?

HORRELL: Yea, well, she was born in this country so she spoke like an American. When she got mad, it was all in Greek, and with my dad, that was all they spoke in the house was Greek.

POULSEN: So you knew both languages?

HORRELL: Well, Greek was my first language. Then I got hives, and went to the hospital. When I came out two weeks later, I said that I was an American now. I had to go to Greek school and re-learn everything.

POULSEN: Were most of your friends then from the Greek community?

HORRELL: Yea, I had very few friends I can't think of any during those years of growing up that were not Greek. We were all first generation Greek, until this day. We get together several times a year. We are all the same age, and we have our own little girl dinners, and talks, and we have a wonderful time. We share our experiences growing up, and we talk about



the different people who have passed on, who we knew and loved, the Priests, and everything that went on in our Greek community.

POULSEN: What did your parents aspire for you after high school?

HORRELL: I think that they just wanted me to get married. [Laughs] Girls didn't have much of a value, you know in a Greek society. A girl, she is almost like a curse, if you have a daughter, now you gotta think, "How am I gonna marry this child off? I have to have a dowry." I think they carry some of that with them here. I don't think I was a curse, but I think that they, mother, would not understand me going to school, and having a real job. I worked, but not a real job.

[Phone rings]

HORRELL: Can I get that?

[Pause in the interview]

HORRELL: What my parents aspired me to be?

POULSEN: Yea.

HORRELL: They wanted grandchildren, and wanted me to get married, and have grandchildren, which I did. I got married.

POULSEN: How many kids did you have?

HORRELL: I had four.

POULSEN: Did you marry someone from the Greek community?

HORRELL: No.



POULSEN: Was that a problem?

HORRELL: No, because I told my dad I wasn't going to marry in the Greek community because of the experiences we had in Greece. Every time we came down from the hotel room there was somebody with a nephew, a son, or brother waiting to marry me. [Laughs] Get a ticket to the United States, and I had had it! I said, "One more and I'm going home, Daddy." And then I was to fall in love with someone from his village. Which then, I didn't want to come home at all. It is just ironic. This is my family.

[Shows photo]

HORRELL: I married, well. These are three of my babies.

POULSEN: So your oldest is how old?

HORRELL: Thirty-nine, these were from my husband's first marriage. Alyssa is a teacher, she is 35. This is Michael, he was killed by a drunk driver when he was 16 . . .

[Phone rings]

HORRELL: . . . and then there is John, who just called, and he is not in there, because he was born after them.

[Pause]

POULSEN: So, you had four children together, and the oldest is Christopher, who just left . . .

HORRELL: and then Alyssa . . .



POULSEN: . . . and you said she is teacher?

HORRELL: Yea, then Michael, was killed by a drunk driver, when he was just 16, and John who just called me and he's just . . .

POULSEN: He goes to A.R.?

HORRELL: No, he's working, and the oldest one is a re-entry student, and so, this I . . .

POULSEN: So, by the time your kids were raised there wasn't this prejudice anymore?

HORRELL: Oh no, Christopher and Alyssa, they all performed as the Horrell Family singers, and I coached them, and directed them, and no, we never had anything. [Laughs] And they were . . . John and Michael were super soccer players. When Michael was killed, he was actually on three soccer teams. When he was killed, in 1986, he had just turned 16.

POULSEN: Did you have your kids go to Greek school?

HORRELL: I was singing in the choir, when Chris and Alyssa were, before I had the other two. [Laughs] The more children that I had, the more difficult it became to get to church. I just couldn't get them all ready to go, but they went to Sunday school. I sang in the choir at that time. I was still singing in the choir at that time.

POULSEN: Did your children attend summer day camps?

HORRELL: No, we were just out here in Citrus Heights.

[End Tape 1, Side A]

[Begin Tape 1, Side B]



POULSEN: You had many things going on?

HORRELL: Yea, very busy family.

POULSEN: All right, so how do you feel about this prejudice that you were talking about? Was that something during that time in the '40s and '50s?

HORRELL: I think, I don't know if today there is prejudice amongst people. I'm not. My daughter is married to a boy from, originally from, Viet Nam. They met at University of Osaka, in Japan, where they were both teaching at the University. His family had migrated to Japan. They were one of the refugee families taken in. Alyssa and Keit met at this age, when she was teaching English there, and Alyssa speaks many languages. She is just a linguist, picks them up like that. When she came home, well, he came over for a visit and they got married. She taught him how to drive a car. She taught him the English language, and within, you know their oldest child now will be 8 in May, and within these eight to nine years, Keit has gotten his M.B.A. He works full time; he teaches karate. He is the most ambitious, smart, intelligent, hard working . . . I'm just so proud of him , I can't believe it.

POULSEN: They live in Elk Grove?

HORRELL: Yea.

POULSEN: That is wonderful.



HORRELL: I've got three grandbabies; I wouldn't have any if it weren't for her!

[Laughs]

POULSEN: I think it is amazing that you have the heritage there, of the children, with the Greek heritage and the Vietnamese, on other side of the world.

HORRELL: Yea, and the little ones know all the foods, the Greek foods, and Daniel who is the oldest of the little three, said to me "My Vietnamese family is coming to visit." I had to laugh and "Yia Yia, I just love you Yia Yia, I just love spanakopita?" He knows all the foods. They go to church some times with me.

POULSEN: Now, are you in contact with any of the family in Greece anymore?

HORRELL: Actually no, I want to go for a visit; I have a fear of flying. But I do plan to go. I plan to go and stay for a while, I have a cousin in Virginia and I have lost her phone number and don't even know her married name, but she is my first cousin. I have first cousins over there, and I want to go back and spend some time with them. I haven't said goodbye. [Laughs] I would like to take my whole, all my kids, and go. I have friends who go every summer and take their grandchildren. They have been raised to know their heritage and they're, by this time, third generation. It is wonderful.

POULSEN: What do you think of Greece? What do you think of? What images do you have in your mind? How do you picture it?



HORRELL: Glorious. The most beautiful, closest place to heaven, that there is, especially my dad's village where you could look up at night and just see, you could touch the stars. Because there were no clouds, there was no pollution, and their life was so simple there, in the village. That it was just like, you almost felt guilty, for all that we have in this country. When they could live so well. So at peace, with themselves, and their surroundings, you almost felt like, how come you live in America? Everything's so and you gotta have this, and you gotta have that, and they are just so simple. They are so at peace with themselves.

We are always striving; no one works harder than the Americans, nobody. Yet they were so at peace with everything. It was so refreshing, is what it was. That they could live off the soil and they could be so happy, and of course, they don't know it, didn't know, what we had.

My thea the oldest of the sisters, came to Athens to meet us, when we arrived in Greece. She came with long black outfit that they wear, because she is a widow, all covered in black; and she comes to the big city for the first time in her life, and she is older. She just thought it was the worst place she had ever been. She could hardly wait to get back to the village. She was so nervous and upset with the people smoking, and the things going on, she just wasn't used it. She had never been around it before.



POULSEN: Now, did she remember you father as a child?

HORRELL: Oh yea, but they had "images" of each other when he left.

POULSEN: Was that pretty heart wrenching to see them?

HORRELL: I cried for three days when I, well, I was emotional. I couldn't believe, [Sighs] I couldn't believe that here he was. I couldn't believe the thing of, where my dad came from. The thing it was, for the first time, and he saying that after he was just children, and then he left, it was just very emotional.

POULSEN: Now you said "thea?" What is that?

HORRELL: Aunt.

POULSEN: How do you spell that?

HORRELL: Well, thea, t-h-e-a, it would be aunt, say Aunt Sophia, thea. So he had four sisters.

POULSEN: So, did you meet all four of them?

HORRELL: Yea, they were all alive then. One by one they died.

POULSEN: How long was your visit?

HORRELL: We were there about six months.

POULSEN: Six months?

HORRELL: Yea, I didn't want to come home. I told you I met a boy, Greek god, [Laughs] blond, green eyes, I didn't want to come home. He had been promised to a little girl from birth. I said "What?" That's how they



arranged marriages. They believe that you learn to love your mate. I don't know if that still goes on today, but it was sure, I couldn't believe it.

POULSEN: In the Greek community of Sacramento would you still hear people talking about dowries?

HORRELL: No.

POULSEN: When would that have been the idea?

HORRELL: See, I don't know how it is over there today. I don't think we ever had to have a dowry. You did look for the best deal, I am sure.

POULSEN: That was in the early twenties then probably?

HORRELL: Yea, and it could have gone on as late as the sixties over there. When I was there, I remember meeting a beautiful girl. She was just beautiful, young and she was engaged to this old man who was like a Colonel in the Greek Army. I'm thinking, they were at my aunt's house, and I am thinking, "How can this be," I'm thinking, "How can she . . ." But you see, he could give her a good life so . . .

POULSEN: It was all about economics?

HORRELL: Yea, a beautiful girl, young . . . horrible.

POULSEN: So, I have asked you a lot of questions, and I appreciate you being able to answer them. Are there some things that you would like to see recorded in your history that we haven't covered?



HORRELL: Well, I would like to finish saying how beautiful Greece is, how I have always yearned to return, how romantic it is, how kind and generous and outgoing the people are, the Greek people are. To see history alive and to see the Parthenon, to see Delphi; to see all these historical things from mythology. It just takes your breath away, and there is nothing like it to compare to it. If I were to say one thing that I would like to do, it would be to some day to be able to enter the archives again, to tell the rest of the Demas story, and the legacy within the Greek community in Sacramento, California. I really haven't finished telling my story yet.

POULSEN: You still have time.

HORRELL: Well, not today. But I would like to go back one day and finish it, because there is a lot to tell.

POULSEN: Well, you were talking about Greece. The water is always blue in the pictures that I see.

HORRELL: Oh man, I cannot swim and I used to get in the water in the sea and it would just hold me up. It was the most wonderful, beautiful blue clear sea that you have ever seen, there is nothing like it.

POULSEN: You talked about the soup that you had at Easter, what are some your other favorite Greek foods?

HORRELL: Yea, we have what we called moussaka, which is eggplant, ground round, akema (phonetic), tomato sauce, and it is done like a casserole, delicious.



We have a pastitsio, which is a macaroni again, a ground round, a red tomato simmery stuff goes in the middle, and then the noodles on top again, and a crème sauce and it's called pastitsio, and it's a casserole. Greek kapama, which is chicken, Greek chicken, like a stewed chicken, delicious.

Avgolemono soup, lemon soup, avgolemono soup, which is the base is chicken broth, lemon, little rice and little egg goes into the soup, delicious.

POULSEN: If I wanted to get some authentic Greek food, what would be the best restaurant to go to?

HORRELL: The Village Inn, I hear their food is just wonderful.

POULSEN: The Village Inn?

HORRELL: Yea, over on University, go get a bowl of that avgolemono soup I told you about. My aunt is so fussy, and she is ninety. You can go to three restaurants before she will decide she is going to sit, and have dinner. Her favorite place is the Pheasant Club, which she remembers it from the forties. So, I don't drive freeways, but whenever she can get anybody to take her to the Pheasant Club, that is where she wants to go. She went twice in a row, about a week ago to avgolemono soup, and it was the best she has ever eaten at the Village Inn. I can hardly wait to get over there. [Laughs] It is expensive so get some small thing, don't get a salad. If you



want a good salad, go up to Daphnes. You take Douglas all the way out, to the Renaissance Shopping Center. It is a fast food Greek place.

POULSEN: That sounds good.

HORRELL: They have a good Greek salad, and it's not expensive. The new restaurant that just opened Opa Opa, is Lebanese, don't go there. I hear it's bad, but I don't know I haven't been.

POULSEN: OK.

HORRELL: All my children cook Greek, including Michael. He used to watch my mother make everything and I was, "I don't have to write anything down, cause Michael knows how to do everything, because he's spent every afternoon with her, after school when he was little." Well, he lived to be not more than sixteen, so I didn't get any of these recipes. The recipes that we have fakis, that's lentil soup. It is delicious. We make the best lentil soup.

Dolmathes, grape leaves ran around rice, wrapped in grape leaves, boiled in lemon and chicken broth, delicious.

Kourabiedes, a powdered sugar cookie, almost like those wedding cookies that you see in the bakeries. Baklava, layered with phyllo and honey. . .

POULSEN: Yes, I know . . . what were the powdered sugar cookies called?

HORRELL: Kourabiedes.

POULSEN: How do you spell that?



HORRELL: You know, I have a Greek cookbook, if you want to look them up.

POULSEN: I can look them up on the Internet.

HORRELL: Melomakarona are one of my favorites, they are like a honey-spiced cookie.

Come to the Greek Food Festival. Call me and we can go one day, you get in free on Fridays, from opening, 11a.m. to 3p.m. at the Convention Center.

POULSEN: You work there?

HORRELL: Yea, I work, we all work, for three days. But you come you call me.

POULSEN: Good idea.

HORRELL: I can either meet you there, or you can come here, and we can go together, if I'm not working that day. Or if I'm working later, and arrange it . . . I like to go every day, because I work.

POULSEN: When is that?

HORRELL: It would be Labor Day weekend, and I can show you. We have the most delicious foods, they are all homemade. We pride ourselves in our food festival.

POULSEN: I bet. Did you work as a young mother?

HORRELL: No.

POULSEN: So were able to be at home?

HORRELL: Yea.



POULSEN: Was that generally how the Greek culture is?

HORRELL: No, everybody's working today. There is no such thing; I don't think you can afford to stay home, everybody's working. I had that luxury. My husband used to tell me, "You don't know how lucky you are to be able to stay home and take care of the kids." I think it would have been easier to go out and get a job, than stay home and take care of the kids. It was a twenty-four hour a day job. I had four children in four different schools. I was running from one end of town to the other.

POULSEN: Did you raise your kids down in East Sac too?

HORRELL: No, here. But everything we did, was with soccer was out here, but ballet. Everything that my daughter did was in town, "The Nutcracker." I ran the backstage for "The Nutcracker," for all the years that she performed in it. She went to Sac State at the age of fifteen.

POULSEN: How did she get in so early?

HORRELL: Well, Alyssa was way advanced. She went to Mercy High School, and because she was in theater, a musical comedy performer, she got to go to Sac State. She also went to Northwestern University at the age of fifteen to the "cherub program" one summer. So she got to do a lot of things that the boys didn't get to do.

POULSEN: Very nice.



HORRELL: She went to U.C.S.D. She was offered a full scholarship to U.C.L.A., but she turned it down. She said, "Mom I don't want to be in performing arts forever." I said, "That's OK, I don't mind." [Laughs]

POULSEN: Anything else we haven't covered? I know we haven't covered every little detail.

HORRELL: No.

POULSEN: But, if you could sum it up?

HORRELL: If I could sum what up, my life?

POULSEN: No, all that you've told me about, that your father appreciated the opportunities that he had . . .

HORRELL: Oh yea.

POULSEN: He probably valued his citizenship?

HORRELL: Yes he did, he did.

POULSEN: Was your mother more traditional then, and she was at home most of the time?

HORRELL: She was at home, too.

POULSEN: Did she drive?

HORRELL: She didn't drive a car until the late '50s. I mean they walked to the store.

POULSEN: Did they get their food everyday at the store?

HORRELL: Just about, just about, yea. It was amazing, we wouldn't think to. Well, you know my daughter was living in Italy for three years, and she every



day, had to go out and get the food. She also went to the University in Padua. When Michael was killed she went on the run, she left and declared herself an Italian major and went to the University of Padua. She picks up any language, just like that.

Then she went to work for an Italian dentist, and he told her he was going to give her so much a month, not knowing she had a command of the Italian language. He cheated her month after month, and she finally said to him, "If you don't give me the money I am going to go to the Labor Board." When she came out with that Italian, boy, she let him have it, and he got scared to death. He had no idea she had such a command of the Italian language.

POULSEN: How many languages does she know?

HORRELL: Italian, Spanish, French was her second language, Vietnamese. She communicated with her husband in Japanese that was their language together. She picked up some Korean because she had to go to Korea for six months and she worked for a David English House.

[Pause] You know I think we covered just about everything that I would want to talk about. My dad was also leader in the community, and he was a founder of the church. At the time of his marriage to my mother, he was President of the Baker's Union of Northern California.

POULSEN: What was his specialty? Did he bake at home?



HORRELL: No.

POULSEN: He wouldn't need to, he would bring things home.

HORRELL: My brother was a costume and set designer, and a painter of watercolors. He won many scholarships to art schools in high school and college. He teaches in Southern California. He is a fine artist, and a costume and set designer.

POULSEN: . . . and yours was music?

HORRELL: Mine was music, and I studied ballet at the Crockett Dance Studio. I took piano from my Aunt Bess Kerhoulas, and I studied voice with the renowned Julia Monroe, who died. We as children growing up had everything; we never had to want for anything. I'd say we had a charmed life.

America was good to my father, and he in turn, as first generation Greeks that we were, was good to us. America was good to him and in turn, he was good to my brother and I. It was good for all of us; we were lucky and fortunate. I loved my dad, I could spend hours at the kitchen table listening to him, hour upon hour, because everything centered around the table. There was food and conversation it was wonderful. I missed; when he died I missed all that. There was a real void in my heart when my father was gone.

POULSEN: When did he die?



HORRELL: '78, and my mother '85. We could spend hours just here at this. [Sweeps arm around table] It was wonderful.

POULSEN: That is probably what they did in the old country?

HORRELL: Yes, the gathering place was the table, and they passed the food around. Whatever they had, they would share, as poor as they were.

POULSEN: How do you spell your Aunt's name?

HORRELL: Aunt Bess Kerhoulas, K-e-r-h-o-u-l-a-s.

POULSEN: Spell out your mother's name?

HORRELL: T-o-u-l-a Kerhoulas and . . .

POULSEN: Then your father was Gust?

HORRELL: Gust John Demas. We are in the archives, he is in the archives, my cousin has done a lot of stuff, you know with genealogy. She goes down to the State Library, and she and her husband are in charge of the bookstore at the church. He is an attorney; she just, I think that she, now that her kids are grown, she has done a lot of history, lots of history here in Sacramento. They have had a lot to do with the old cemetery, and they get dressed up, do you know about that?

POULSEN: Yes, so what is the family name of these people that have the bookstore?

HORRELL: Demas.

POULSEN: Anybody who wants to find more information on the family? Which would be the place to . . .



HORRELL: Marilyn Demas, on the Demas side.

POULSEN: I am going to close this interview for now unless there is anything else you would like to say, I appreciate letting us have your thoughts.

HORRELL: My honor, my honor.

POULSEN: Once again, I always learn something, and I certainly have learned a lot listening to you talk, thank you Joanne.

HORRELL: Well, thank you Debbie, thank you.

[End Tape 1, Side B]